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Provisional

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Thursday, 25 January 2001, 3.15 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Mahbubani	(Singapore)
Members:	Bangladesh	Mr. Ahmed
	China	Mr. Shen Guofang
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Ireland	Mr. Ryan
	Jamaica	Mr. Ward
	Mali	Mr. Ouane
	Mauritius	Mr. Neewoor
	Norway	Mr. Strømmen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Granovsky
	Tunisia	Mr. Ben Mustapha
	Ukraine	Mr. Kuchynski
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Eldon
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

The situation in Sierra Leone

Note by the President of the Security Council (S/2000/1195).

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01-22726 (E)

The meeting was resumed at 3.15 p.m.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Sweden. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Schori (Sweden): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta, and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association country Iceland, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union welcomes the report of the United Nations Panel of Experts on Sierra Leone, and we thank Ambassador Chowdhury and all five members of the Panel for the valuable work they have done. This is a comprehensive report by independent experts, which sheds light on the covert network of support to the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). We take particular note of the conclusion that systematic and deliberate violations of Security Council resolutions, especially by the leadership of Liberia, continue to fuel this long and bitter conflict which has brought misery to the people of Sierra Leone. Now is the time for the international community to show clearly by its actions that such activities will no longer be tolerated.

The links between conflict diamonds and the arms trade are at the core of the tragedy in Sierra Leone. The RUF continues to rely on illegal trade in diamonds to finance its campaign of violence, and the population continues to suffer.

The European Union is particularly concerned about the role played by the Liberian leadership, under President Charles Taylor, in fuelling the violence in Sierra Leone. The report provides conclusive evidence that President Taylor is a key provider of arms and related material to the RUF. Investigations also show that RUF activities are financed through diamonds mined in Sierra Leone and that the Liberian air registry is being used for illicit trafficking in arms. The EU demands that Liberia and all other parties involved in the violation of sanctions cease such activities immediately.

The Panel of Experts recommends a number of robust and wide-ranging measures to address the problems they have identified. Some of these measures fall beyond the scope of the Security Council itself and require implementation in other forums. For instance, the report once again demonstrates the importance of action on the proliferation of small arms, on both the supply and the demand sides. The EU welcomes, and has expressed its readiness to support, current efforts, such as the Moratorium of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), to prevent the illicit trade in small arms in West Africa. The EU also supports efforts by individual countries, both in the region and elsewhere, to tighten their air traffic regulations and strengthen their customs controls.

The EU supports the recommendations of the Panel of Experts for early action to curb the flow of conflict diamonds from the region. We would support coordinated action in order to establish national certification schemes in the region, as well as measures to strengthen control in countries identified as transit States for conflict diamonds. We also underline the importance of the recommendations of the Panel of Experts that a global certification scheme be developed as soon as possible. In this context, the EU emphasizes its strong support for last year's General Assembly resolution 55/56, on conflict diamonds.

The Panel of Experts was mandated to look primarily at the situation in Sierra Leone. Over time it has become apparent that President Taylor's destabilizing agenda is spreading also to Guinea and having dramatic effects on the security and humanitarian situation of refugees and internally displaced persons in that country. We applaud ECOWAS efforts to try to deal with the situation in Guinea, and we believe that a regional dimension of this crisis further underlines the need for action by the Security Council.

The European Union shares the strong concern of the Panel of Experts that sanctions on diamonds and weapons are being broken with impunity. We therefore believe that effective pressure to persuade President Taylor and his associates to comply with the sanctions and to put an end to their support for the rebel movement in neighbouring countries should be a key element in the Security Council's and the international community's response to the West African crisis. Such measures should be targeted at the Liberian leadership — yes — while limiting the impact on the Liberian people themselves.

We express our strong support for the intention of the Security Council to take action in order to put pressure on President Taylor and follow up on the recommendations of the Panel of Experts. In this context, the EU also supports an extension of the mandate of the Panel of Experts.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Canada. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Duval (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset, Mr. President, to echo the sentiments of those who congratulated you this morning on having organized this open meeting of the Security Council, which shows your concern for transparency. I would also like to thank Ambassador Chowdhury and the Panel of Experts, who have done a tremendous job on this question.

Canada welcomes the report of the Panel of Experts on Sierra Leone and expresses its gratitude to the members of the Panel for their detailed analysis of the role of diamond- and arms-smuggling in this brutal war.

The economic sources of conflict must first be exposed if they are to be addressed properly. This report is part of an important trend of examining in depth the economic causes of certain conflicts, including in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, of "naming and shaming" those who profit from and sustain these wars and of taking meaningful action where necessary, including, in the most egregious situations, the imposition of sanctions and embargo measures. Why should this not be done upstream, at the source of the problem, as well as further down the line?

During our time on the Security Council, Canada argued that the Council should consider a range of measures, both coercive and collaborative, to ensure compliance with United Nations resolutions aimed at ending the wars in Sierra Leone and Angola. We believe that this report provides sufficient basis for the adoption of sanctions targeting those identified by the Panel, bearing in mind the need for such sanctions to be both effective and sustainable, while safeguarding civilian populations and the legitimate diamond industry.

In light of the unambiguous conclusions drawn in this report, Canada supports the immediate imposition of an embargo on diamond exports from Liberia, as well as other measures recommended in the report, given that country's clear role as a transit point for gems mined illegally in Sierra Leone. We also support the development, with the Council's support, of stringent control measures in neighbouring countries. Should these collaborative efforts prove inadequate, the Council ought not to hesitate to extend the embargo to other States if and as needed.

We also encourage members to examine carefully the numerous other recommendations in this report with a view to reaching agreement on a comprehensive package of measures that are both effective and pragmatic. We encourage the Security Council to engage relevant bodies in the development of those measures and of criteria for measuring compliance by the States targeted in the report. Any such measure should be tied to explicit criteria, as the Council, we believe, must avoid measures that are ambiguous or open-ended.

(*spoke in English*)

Sanctions are becoming an increasingly effective tool for the maintenance of international peace and security. The various panels of experts established by the Council have helped to bring this situation about. It is essential that this trend continue. The Council's credibility is at issue. More to the point, the Council must have at its disposal viable options between deploying force on the one hand and merely uttering words on the other.

However substantial the contribution made by the ad hoc investigative panels established for Sierra Leone and Angola, we believe that sanctions monitoring would be still more effective if the United Nations were to approach monitoring and enforcement on a less provisional and more systematic basis. Quite simply, targeted sanctions will not work if the Council does not put in place the necessary arrangements to detect violations and to determine the sources and methods of violations. Monitoring arrangements should remain in place for the duration of each targeted sanctions regime, not for finite periods of three, six or nine months' duration.

We urge the Council to consider putting in place a standing, integrated monitoring arrangement, not least to improve efficiency and reduce overlap in the Security Council's efforts to detect violations of Council measures. Instead of having three separate

panels looking at similar issues in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone — and often visiting the same capitals in close succession speak to or about the same individuals — why not have a single monitoring office operating with reference to these and other sanctions regimes, as well to related issues such as illegal trafficking in high-value commodities? Such an office would function on an ongoing basis, submitting reports through the various sanctions Committees at their requests.

We encourage Council members to reflect on how much more effective sanctions would be if such an arrangement were in place and how much greater a deterrent value such sanctions would have. The cost would not be significantly greater than it is at present. The effect would be greater, with the result that the objectives for which the various sanctions regimes were established would stand a far greater chance of being achieved. We are delighted to note that a significant number of members of the Council support this idea.

Finally, we note that there has been an increase in the level of the legitimate, Government-controlled diamond trade in Sierra Leone as a consequence of both the diamond certification scheme supported by the Security Council and of the extensive attention paid to the issue of conflict diamonds recently by industry, Governments and the public. We reiterate our support for international efforts to devise effective and pragmatic measures to eliminate conflict diamonds, with a particular focus on proposals for an international certification scheme for rough diamonds. We call for a concerted approach among diamond-producing and diamond-trading States and believe that today's discussion will underscore the merits of and the need for effective action by both.

The President: In accordance with the decision taken earlier in the meeting, I invite the Permanent Observer of Switzerland to the United Nations to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Staehelin (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland rarely addresses the Security Council, but today we believe that a statement is necessary because Switzerland is mentioned in the report of the Panel of Experts established by resolution 1306 (2000) concerning Sierra Leone.

At the outset, I would stress that my Government, too, is concerned by the situation in Sierra Leone and by the resulting instability throughout the region. We support the efforts of the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States to provide a speedy and lasting solution to these problems.

Switzerland particularly welcomes the various measures adopted by the Security Council to put an end to the conflict and to promote peace and stability in the region. We believe that United Nations sanctions aimed, inter alia, at eliminating the economic bases that allow the conflict situation to persist are an important instrument for attaining these goals.

In order to make these sanctions truly effective, we need to be mindful of the risk of their being circumvented. This problem is particularly relevant with regard to the illicit importation of rough diamonds from Sierra Leone. In this respect, I wish to recall that my Government has not only fully implemented all the recommendations of the Security Council, but has gone even further in many spheres. It has, inter alia, taken additional steps to enforce more effectively the sanctions regime in the free ports and has drawn up a list of countries that are potentially vulnerable to the diamond traffic that sustains conflict. These countries require increased vigilance.

The Swiss Government therefore regrets the fact that the report of the Panel of Experts — contrary to the recent, similar report on sanctions against UNITA — refers in a partial and incomplete way to the measures taken by Switzerland in this area, which are detailed in the annex to the letter that I have addressed to the President of the Security Council in document S/2000/1232.

Allow me to add that my country supports international efforts to design a global certification system to prevent trade in conflict diamonds. We welcome the General Assembly's adoption last December of the resolution on the role of diamonds, as well as the efforts that have been made by participants in the "Kimberley Process". That Process has clearly received a mandate from the General Assembly to continue its work in this direction. Switzerland intends to be actively involved in these efforts.

In conclusion, I would stress that my Government attaches great importance to the promotion of peace and stability in Sierra Leone and neighbouring countries. At stake are not only the security of the

people, but sustainable development throughout the entire region.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Guinea. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Camara (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to convey to you, Sir, my delegation's sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Council. Given our knowledge and appreciation of your outstanding personal and professional qualities, my delegation is confident that under your guidance, the Security Council, in this first month of the new millennium, will be able to write a fresh chapter in its history.

Sir, I wish to welcome your recent initiative to facilitate greater cooperation between countries that contribute troops to peacekeeping operations and the Security Council, so as to enhance the work of the Council. I wish also to express our appreciation to the Council for having enabled our delegation to take part in today's meeting, which is devoted to the consideration of a situation that affects the equilibrium of the whole of the West African region in general, and my country in particular.

Indeed, for more than 10 years now, our subregion has been gripped by a crisis that has seriously jeopardized peace and security in our countries. Everyone is aware of the great sufferings that have afflicted the peoples of Liberia and Sierra Leone for a decade now. My delegation would wish to stress in particular the atrocities committed during that period in the two afflicted countries, the hundreds of thousands of people forced into exile and the considerable material damage that has resulted.

Thanks to their determination, the States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its interposition force, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group, were able to end the genocide in Liberia. The return of peace and the holding of free elections in that country, which allowed those very parties who were responsible for the genocide to come into power, have not diminished their belligerence. They have continued their activities of destabilization and destruction against other neighbouring States, in particular Sierra Leone and Guinea.

The involvement and outright support of the Liberian Government for various rebel movements of the subregion have been proved beyond a doubt. The Monrovia authorities are pursuing a policy of terrorism, thereby violating all of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, ECOWAS and the Mano River Union.

The allegations made by the delegation of Liberia are unfounded and cannot in any way disguise the belligerent nature of the Liberian authorities. Everyone is aware of the support given by Liberia and its President to the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels. Liberia and other States of the region are the main suppliers of weapons to the various rebel groups operating in Western Africa, in a flagrant and widespread violation of the arms sanctions imposed by the Security Council.

The excellent report of the Panel of Experts on the links between blood diamonds and weapons in Sierra Leone is very instructive in this regard. We would like to commend the outstanding work done by the Panel under its Chairman, Mr. Chowdhury.

My country, the Republic of Guinea, is subject to rebel attacks led from Monrovia and supported by RUF rebels. These attacks have resulted in a great number of deaths, including that of an official of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; significant material damage; and a genuine humanitarian disaster involving the displacement of border populations and the scattering of hundreds of thousands of refugees.

Despite the recent statement of the President of the Security Council condemning these attacks and pointing the finger explicitly at Liberia, the incursions continue. It is absolutely vital to put an end to the terrorist activities of the Monrovia authorities and to break the link between Sierra Leone diamonds and the supply of weapons to rebel movements. This is the challenge that the Security Council is tackling today.

It is understandable, therefore, why my delegation welcomes this initiative and hails the measures contained in the draft resolution before the Council. We hope that the targeted sanctions that have been envisaged will send a strong signal to the Liberian President to end his support for rebel and terrorist movements.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to encourage the Council to monitor compliance with, and respect for, the provisions contained in the draft resolution, as soon as it is adopted.

The President: I thank the representative of Guinea for the kind words he addressed to me and to my delegation.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Burkina Faso. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Ambassador Kishore Mahbubani, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the first month of this year. We congratulate you also on the skill and wisdom that you are demonstrating and on the outstanding manner in which you are conducting our deliberations.

I should like also to congratulate the new members of the Council — Colombia, Ireland, Mauritius, Norway and Singapore. We wish them every success in carrying out their new and heavy responsibilities.

The Panel of Experts set up by Security Council resolution 1306 (2000) has submitted its final report, on which the Council will subsequently be delivering its conclusions. As everyone knows, this report concerns us, and I should therefore like, on behalf of my Government, to make a brief statement in this respect.

Since the very beginning, Burkina Faso's position has been well-known, having been set forth in detail — first, during the initial hearings on Sierra Leone diamonds last July at the United Nations; then during the various discussions with members of the Panel during their investigative missions in our country; and again in London last December, where, during the intergovernmental meeting on conflict diamonds, we had an opportunity once again to make our position clear.

Finally, in the broader context of the General Assembly, we recently participated in a debate on the role of conflict diamonds, which resulted in the adoption of resolution 55/56, which we co-sponsored. Accordingly, we deem it, to put it mildly, inappropriate to try to argue the case once again and to put us on the defensive. Wisdom and the determination to try to find a solution to the question incline us merely to take note of the final report of the Panel of Experts.

One of the objectives of the Security Council, when it assigned the investigation mission to the Panel of Experts, was to encourage incriminated countries to attest to their good faith and their total willingness to cooperate with the United Nations. That is how we understood the message, and that is how we translated it in the various steps taken by my Government to show our full willingness and firm resolve to work with the United Nations transparently and honestly.

The first step was to set up an inter-ministerial committee on 22 March 2000 to follow up sanctions against UNITA. Article 1 of the enabling legislation stipulates "the general authority for the follow-up and implementation of Security Council resolutions". The immediate consequence of this regulation was that nationals of Angola and Sierra Leone, with the exception of those on official mission from the legal Governments of these countries, would be prohibited from entering, transiting or residing in Burkina Faso.

Subsequently, the Government prohibited, according to a decree issued on 27 October 2000, any transactions involving precious stones and metals coming from conflict areas throughout the whole of the national territory of Burkina Faso. Shortly after, we welcomed three successive investigative missions to Ouagadougou from the United Nations, the first two concerning Angola and the latter Sierra Leone, to which our Government gave total freedom and full facilities for conducting their work. They were allowed to visit and even to photograph military warehouses. They were allowed to question whomever they wanted, and, of course, they were allowed to have working meetings with the inter-ministerial committee. In a word, Burkina Faso, a nation which respects freedom and is now open to democratic values and requirements, gave every leeway to your *missi dominici* freely to accomplish their duty.

But the most important and decisive step by far was the one that followed from the decision taken by Burkina Faso to establish a mechanism to monitor the importing and utilization of weapons, a mechanism which will be established for a period of three years under United Nations supervision. Furthermore, I can announce to this Council that the decree that established this mechanism and which defined its juridical nature and regime, as well as the modalities for its functioning, has just been adopted by the governmental council at its meeting of 24 January 2001. A letter addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations proposes that both sides, Burkina Faso and the United Nations, get together to determine

the political and technical structure under which this mechanism could be formalized.

Under the terms of the decree, the mechanism is governed by a high authority consisting of members of the Government and the Parliament — that is, the National Assembly and the Chamber of Representatives — which is authorized, under United Nations supervision, to

> "monitor any import of weapons by the Government of Burkina Faso, in strict conformity with the relevant provisions of the ECOWAS Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons, also in strict conformity with the rules governing public contracts, as well as procedures for the issuance of final destination certificates and the drafting of the import manifest. The High Authority is also authorized to prevent any illicit trafficking in weapons in the territory of Burkina Faso".

It is understood, furthermore, that the United Nations would be informed of how weapons acquired by Burkina Faso would be used under our national budget and that any movement of weapons would be the subject of prior communication to the United Nations Secretariat.

So, in brief, this is the substance of this measure that we hope will remove, once and for all, any ambiguity and will allay any suspicion about us. Very few States would be prepared to subject themselves to this action, which is tantamount to infringement of sovereignty. Burkina Faso did so to prove its staunch resolve to contribute to the implementation of Security Council resolutions and any other measures that seek to guarantee peace and security in Africa and in the world.

It is precisely in the light of all of these efforts by my country that it is really difficult for us to understand the recommendations contained in paragraph 35 of the report. According to these recommendations, the Panel of Experts recommends new investigations into the import of weapons by Burkina Faso over the last five years — that is to say, well before the Council's seizure of the question of Sierra Leone, because the first resolution on Sierra Leone dates back to 1997. Frankly, we do not understand the reasons behind this recommendation, which does not offer any encouragement to the steps taken by my country, but what is more, it does not contribute at all to trying to find a solution to the Sierra Leonean crisis. To put it mildly, my Government thinks that the best reward for our total commitment to cooperate with the United Nations would be to close the past chapter in order to give the present and the future a chance.

In conclusion, Mr. President, and without prejudice to decisions that your Council will be taking in due course following its deliberations on the report of the Panel of Experts, we wish to convey thanks to those who have understood us and even supported us and to those who have not spared us when it came to criticizing us. You are all entitled to our respect, because all of you, in your own way and according to your view of the objective facts and of fairness, have done your duty.

Mr. Jagne (Gambia): At the outset, let me congratulate you on your becoming President of the Security Council. We are delighted to see you in the chair. With your legendary dynamism and vast experience, we are confident that your presidency will be eventful and successful. We wish you the very best. Similarly, my delegation would like to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Lavrov, for a job well done.

Having said that, we also thank you for organizing this open meeting devoted to the report of the Panel of Experts on Sierra Leone, diamonds and arms. We welcome the idea of bringing this thorny issue out in the open. It affords us the opportunity of not only clearing our name but also stopping the bad blood in our West African subregion that the Sierra Leonean blood diamonds have recently created, further exacerbated by the broad and thorough report of the Panel of Experts.

We in the Gambia were flabbergasted by its baseless and malicious allegations. As a peace-loving nation that has always enjoyed excellent relations with Sierra Leone, a sister country, it has made our blood boil and has left us wondering whether, for some obscure reason or reasons unknown to us, the Panel is out for our country's blood. Despite all the odds, our blood is not up. All we want to do is to set the record straight.

First and foremost, we would have thought that the Panel of Experts, out of courtesy, should have visited the Gambia and discussed any issue of concern

with the competent Gambian authorities, as the Experts have done with other countries mentioned in their report. Why have they not done so? Is there a hidden agenda to mount a smear campaign against the Gambia? What is the motive behind these baseless allegations? The representative of Ukraine is perfectly right in stating that all relevant evidence should be brought to the attention of the Governments concerned. That was not the case with my Government. Yet we all want a healthy and fruitful working relationship with the Panel.

Let me hasten to point out that we have never denied that some individuals have been involved in this trade since time immemorial — long before the Gambia gained independence from Britain in 1965. This is common knowledge. My Sierra Leonean colleague and friends and I have laughed over it many times. He is here to bear me witness. But there should be a distinction between the actions of individuals and those of a Government. Individuals should be accountable for their actions. A Government should not be taken to task for, or have to account for, the actions of an individual or group of individuals, especially in a case like this.

This is why we are insisting on our invitation to the Panel of Experts to visit the Gambia and present to the authorities in Banjul the evidence they have — if any — linking the Government to this illegal trade. That is all that we require from this body: treat the Gambia fairly. We are therefore requesting the Security Council, in all fairness, guided by the principle of equal treatment of all States, to send the Panel of Experts to the Gambia and show us any proof that our Government exports diamonds.

It is sad to say, but this is ridiculous, to say the least, for a country that has no mineral resources. It is simply ludicrous! The Government of the Gambia will defend its integrity at all costs, but we want to give the Council the chance to send the Panel of Experts to Banjul first, before we take any appropriate action to restore our country's good name.

Thank God, in the case of the Gambia, there is no evidence whatsoever establishing any links between the sale of diamonds and gun-running activities in Sierra Leone. Besides, the Gambia has no borders with Sierra Leone.

Through the unscrupulous behaviour of some individuals, it is possible that diamonds might be passing through the Gambia to other destinations, but it is preposterous to even insinuate that the Government either condones or participates in such transactions, or derives any revenue from this illegal trade, either through taxes or otherwise.

Considering the Gambia's stance regarding maintaining peace and stability within our subregion in particular and in Africa generally, the country cannot be involved in any activity that could have negative effects in Sierra Leone or contribute to the procurement of arms and the encouragement of war. The Gambia, despite its meagre resources, will continue to do all it can to contribute to the search for an honourable solution to the Sierra Leonean crisis. The bonds uniting Sierra Leone and the Gambia — and they are many and date back many centuries — are too strong for such baseless allegations to undo. The number of Sierra Leonean refugees in the Gambia is a testimony to our long-standing ties of friendship and cooperation with that country.

In conclusion, the Government of the Gambia is again calling on the Panel to withdraw its statement on the Gambia and indicate as soon as possible the dates on which a delegation of the Panel of Experts could visit Banjul, so that we could together inform the whole world that the Government of the Gambia is too much aware of its international obligations to be involved in such a shameful trade. These allegations are unfounded, and therefore we want our country's name removed from the list of countries dealing in 'blood diamonds.

There is still time to set the record straight. This is why we support the extension of the mandate of the Panel, as proposed by the United Kingdom. In this way, the Panel will be able to carry on with its unfinished business, including an early visit to the Gambia — preferably before the scheduled meeting early next month between the Security Council and a ministerial delegation from the Economic Community of West African States — so as to clear the air as far as my Government is concerned.

To echo the words of the President, we should act swiftly on the Panel's report, but justly. All that we ask is that the Gambia be treated fairly, by separating the chaff from the grain. That is all we want, nothing more, nothing less.

The President: I thank the representative of the Gambia for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Côte d'Ivoire. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Bouah-Kamon (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for giving Côte d'Ivoire the opportunity to take part in this important meeting of the Security Council, which is once again addressing the situation in Sierra Leone in the light of the report of the Panel of Experts created pursuant to resolution 1306 (2000). This report is presented by Ambassador Chowdhury in document S/2000/1195, dated 20 December 2000. I commend the Ambassador for the quality of the work that has been done.

Before continuing my remarks on this subject, allow me to convey to you, Mr. President, my delegation's warmest greetings and congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January — this being the first presidency of the year 2001 and of the new millennium. If it they are not too late, please accept as well my best wishes for the new year. The decisive role that your dynamic country, the Republic of Singapore, plays to promote development and peace around the world leads me to believe most assuredly that you will carry out your task with success, to the benefit of our Organization and of all its Members.

The report that is the subject of our meeting today provides the Council information about possible violations of measures taken by the Council to end the existing links between the diamond trade and the supply and circulation of arms and related *matériel*, by various ways and means, in the West African subregion and elsewhere.

In this regional context, my country is named at various points in the report as being among those having special relationships with the countries or the parties in conflict in Sierra Leone. More to the point, my country is named as a venue for commercial transactions in diamonds and for aerial navigation, to the benefit of the actors in the war in Sierra Leone.

Before attempting to respond to the parts of the report that implicitly suggest that Côte d'Ivoire plays an important role in the various types of trade fuelling the war efforts of the conflicting parties in Sierra Leone, I would like to tell the Council that my country approves of its initiative to entrust a panel of experts with the mission of shedding light on the issue of involvement by States of the subregion.

I would also like to highlight one fact, namely, that Côte d'Ivoire was unable to provide the Panel of Experts with statistics about Côte d'Ivoire's import and export of diamonds in good time, that is, before the preparation of the Panel's report. It has since done so, in a letter dated 4 January 2001 addressed to the secretariat of the Security Council Committee on Sierra Leone established by resolution 1132 (1997). That delay was justified by the unstable political situation that has prevailed in Côte d'Ivoire since 24 December 1999. Since that time, there have been four Governments. The delay in providing information has been due to administrative changes, and not because of any indifference or lack of consideration by my country for the United Nations. I would once again like to reaffirm to the Council the commitment of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to resolutely undertake measures to ensure compliance with Security Council sanctions within the context of its overall policies.

The second part of the report deals with weapons. Its chapter III, which is entitled "The role of other countries", deals in particular with the weapons of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). Paragraph 194 states that private brokers and arms merchants are the main suppliers of the RUF and that most large arms and ammunition supplies reach the RUF only indirectly and through countries with Governments sympathetic to it. Paragraph 195 names Côte d'Ivoire and says that

> "Côte d'Ivoire, under previous administrations, was sympathetic to the Liberian government and, indirectly, to the RUF in Sierra Leone. The Ivorian relationship dates back to the training of RUF and Liberian rebels in Côte d'Ivoire in the early 1990s."

In that connection, I wish to make the point that the word "training" is imprecise, as training involves various aspects. What aspect are we talking about here? Let us avoid any blurring of distinctions.

Having said that, I would like to point out that Côte d'Ivoire has constantly striven to maintain excellent relations with all its immediate neighbours. With regard to Liberia in particular, it should be noted that Liberia is like other countries bordering on Côte d'Ivoire in that they are made up of the same peoples, who were artificially separated by the borders inherited from colonialization. It must be kept in mind that the Krahns and the Gios of Liberia are the Gueres and Yacuba of Côte d'Ivoire. Moreover, it is precisely

because of this ethnic affinity that there has been a harmonious integration of Liberian refugees into Côte d'Ivoire.

It should also be noted that late President Houphouët-Boigny — the country's first President — and the Government and people of Côte d'Ivoire have spared no sacrifice to help to restore peace to Liberia. The thousands of Liberian refugees fraternally welcomed by the people of Côte d'Ivoire at the height of the civil war in Liberia attest to that fact.

In addition, the role played by Côte d'Ivoire to try to restore peace to Liberia and Sierra Leone should also be recalled. Sierra Leone's recent history includes the Abidjan agreements signed by the Freetown Government and the RUF, which at the time was headed by Mr. Foday Sankoh. I would also like to remind the Council that it was due to the efforts of diplomats from Côte d'Ivoire that Mr. Sankoh was induced to quit his retreat in the forests of Sierra Leone to come to the negotiating table. It does not seem fair to us that the relations we had, and which we continue to have, with the two fraternal countries of Liberia and Sierra Leone — and even with the RUF — should be interpreted as a sign of being sympathetic to the appalling activities being condemned by the international community. It would have been desirable for the report to be precise at this point, especially as the events mentioned go back to the early 1990s.

Similar precision should have been applied to paragraph 209, which refers to the flight of an Ukrainian BAC-111 aircraft that allegedly flew to Abidjan without declaring the date and time of its arrival, information necessary for a national investigation.

With regard to paragraph 216, which refers to the private activities of an Israeli businessman resident in Abidjan who is allegedly very close to President Charles Taylor, I believe the Council will agree with me that the activities and movements of that individual cannot be imputed to the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, in particular as that person holds a Liberian diplomatic passport.

With regard to the report's technical points relating to air traffic monitoring systems in West Africa and to a certification regime for diamonds originating in Sierra Leone, my country would be happy to support any initiative to make United Nations sanctions more effective that would not jeopardize its national interests or, above all, involve additional expenses to the countries of the subregion.

Similarly, Côte d'Ivoire is prepared to sign — if it has not already done so — the 1989 International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries. I take this opportunity to assure countries neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire, and the international community at large, that the Government of my country has never permitted, and will never permit, anyone to use its territory to undermine the territorial or political integrity of any country in Africa or anywhere else in the world.

Animated by that commitment, the Côte d'Ivoire of the Second Republic, under the leadership of President Laurent Gbagbo, reaffirms its full readiness to continue to work in close cooperation with the United Nations, the Security Council and the sanctions Committees.

The new authorities of my country, who came to power only three months ago, call on the international community to give them the time to settle in and to become acquainted with these issues, and to extend understanding to them so that they may restore to full vigour the position and image of Côte d'Ivoire on the international scene, in accordance with the principles and ideals of the United Nations.

The President: I thank the representative of Côte d'Ivoire for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Belgium. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Adam (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Belgium fully supports the statement made on behalf of the European Union by the Permanent Representative of Sweden as President of the European Union.

As the Ambassador of Sweden did, I too would like to congratulate Ambassador Chowdhury and the Panel of Experts for the excellent job done.

My country would like to take this opportunity to reiterate its resolve to find a solution to the problem of conflict diamonds, as well as to say that we fully agree with the Panel's conclusions. I would like to make three particular points.

With regard to the need to establish a global certification scheme for rough diamonds based on the system adopted in Sierra Leone, I should like to recall

the prominent role played by Belgium, together with other countries involved in the diamond trade, in the Kimberly process. One of the goals of this process is precisely to establish such a system.

Belgium has great experience in the area of diamonds, and this enabled us to make a decisive contribution to the establishment of the certification system adopted by Sierra Leone. We are prepared to share this experience with the international community so that the system can be expanded.

Paragraph 162 of the report (S/2000/1195, enclosure) states that "It is essential, and a matter of urgency" to set up a harmonized system of public documentation and statistics on diamond imports and exports. We support this concept, as well as the idea of transparency in that area. We are convinced that, whatever kind of global certification scheme is established, one of the key elements for its success will be transparency. My country publishes, on a monthly and annual basis, detailed and complete statistics on all imports and exports of diamonds.

In conclusion, in paragraph 165, the report proposes the creation of an "ongoing focal point ... to monitor adherence to sanctions". Belgium supports this idea, because we are aware of the risk of overlap and duplication caused by the simultaneous existence of three panels of experts.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Niger. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Moutari (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I should like first of all to express the gratitude of the Niger for being able to speak on this agenda item concerning the report of the Panel of Experts on the traffic in diamonds and the conflict situation prevailing in Sierra Leone, which was introduced this morning by Ambassador Chowdhury of Bangladesh.

For us, the fact that this Council — which bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security — is being presided over by Mr. Kishore Mahbubani of Singapore is a guarantee of a dispassionate and fair debate whose outcome will be beneficial to Sierra Leone, Africa and the world.

With the aim of bringing peace to our West African subregion, and peace, stability and well-being to our continent as a whole, as our people so profoundly desire, my country has been working closely with the other members of the Economic Community of West African States for such a long time.

That is why, when my delegation was presented with the information in the report, my Government began to carry out the necessary preliminary investigations and communicated to the Secretariat the following information.

The BAC-111 aircraft, with the registration VP-CLM, belonging to the company Aeroleasing Inc., did, indeed, land in Niamey on 22 December 1998 at 21.11 local time, having come from Monrovia, and departed on 23 December 1998 at 19.02 local time. However, at present it is not possible to say what kind of goods that aircraft may have been carrying because the records are kept for only three months. Nevertheless, the competent authorities of the Niger have ordered an investigation to be carried out in order to obtain the information that has been requested.

The Niger will, of course, provide its full and wholehearted cooperation for any initiative that this Council undertakes to bring peace and security to Sierra Leone and the subregion.

I should like to convey our great admiration to you, Sir, and wish you every success as you carry out your functions as President of the Council. I should also like to express to your predecessor, Ambassador Lavrov, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation — that great country of which we still have vivid memories of a pleasant visit — our deep appreciation for the outstanding way in which he presided over the Council last month.

The President: I thank the representative of the Niger for his kind words addressed to me.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.